

MEDIA RELEASE
Embargoed until Sunday 29th November 2015

Outback Air Race soars to new heights for the RFDS

27 November, 2015

A new fundraising record of \$585,000 was today announced and the final cheque presented to the Royal Flying Doctor Service by the Steadfast Outback Air Race (SOAR) 2015 organising committee.

This triennial event is now the largest community fundraising event held on behalf of the RFDS in Western Australia, having raised over \$2 million since its inception in 1996.

On 24 August, 2015, a group of 26 light aircraft piloted by over 70 crew and passengers from all over Australia, met and departed from Esperance WA, on a 5,000km two week fundraising adventure through remote outback Australia.

"This event just keeps getting better. The support of our sponsors and supporters, the effort put in by our participants, the spirit that evolves on the event, and the amount of money raised by it, never ceases to amaze me," said Stuart Payne, Event Treasurer and veteran of the last four events.

The route took in many of Australia's iconic landmarks including Uluru, Alice Springs, then over the Simpson Desert to Birdsville and Winton. It then saw participants fly over the spectacular Gulf Country to Karumba and across to tropical Cooktown, with the race finale and a breathtaking flight down the East coast to Hamilton Island.

Interestingly, the total kilometres flown by the 26 race teams, equating to about 225,000km, is around nine average days flying by the RFDS in Western Australia.

"The event is actually more of an exercise in precision piloting than a race, with teams being scored on accurately flying over pinpoint GPS start and finish points within a time that they nominate", said Mr Payne.

"So tight was this year's competition, that to be in a top three position each day, pilots were required to be within metres of the GPS waypoints from typically a thousand feet above them, and within seconds of their nominated time," he added.

"With a great committee of volunteers, spread across the country, who worked tirelessly and professionally to deliver an extremely safe and well planned event, it was thrilling to have exceeded all stakeholder expectations in such a tough economic environment," said Mr Payne.

The RFDS in Western Australia provided aero medical and primary health care services to almost 28,000 people in the past year, catering to a vast 2.5 million kilometre state.

"This year the RFDS in Western Australia is celebrating 80 years of service," said Nick Harvey, RFDS WA Executive General Manager of Corporate Affairs. "With demand at record levels, the fundraising efforts of events such as the Outback Air Race is paramount in ensuring the RFDS can be there to support those in need into the future."

“The RFDS are thrilled with the result from this year’s Outback Air Race – an event record was raised nationally, which will assist us in continuing to deliver our services to those living, working and travelling right across Australia,” Mr Harvey added.

The RFDS hosted a morning tea and tour of the facilities at its Jandakot Base today for sponsors, participants and their families, to acknowledge their significant commitment and support.

To donate to the RFDS call 1300 669 569 or check out www.flyingdoctor.org.au

Photo opportunity: *Outback Air Race sponsors and participants along with RFDS staff and aircraft – RFDS, 3 Eagle Drive, Jandakot at 10am Sunday 29th November.*

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